

REMARKS

The Applicants and their representative first wish to thank Examiner Bullock for the courtesies extended in the in-person interview conducted on April 15, 2005.

The Office Action dated October 19, 2004, has been received and carefully considered. Claims 1, 4-24, and 31-35 are pending in the present application. Reconsideration of the outstanding rejection of claims 1, 4-24, and 31-35 in the present application is respectfully requested based on the following remarks.

I. The Meunier Patent Is Not Prior Art

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 7, 15, and 31 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Meunier (U.S. Patent No. 6,618,369), rejects claims 32-35 under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being obvious over Meunier, and rejects claims 8-14 and 16-24 as being obvious over Meunier in view of Shklar (U.S. Patent No. 6,253,239). These rejections are hereby respectfully traversed.

The Meunier reference was filed May 5, 1999 and does not claim priority to any prior application. Thus, the Meunier reference has an effective filing date of May 5, 1999.

Applicants respectfully assert that the invention disclosed and claimed in the present application was conceived and reduced to practice prior to May 5, 1999. Applicants support the above-stated assertion with inventor declarations under 37 C.F.R. § 1.131, which are submitted herewith, and which contain a showing of facts that establish the above-stated submissions. Accordingly, the Meunier reference is not a prior art reference with respect to the claims of the present application.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the anticipation rejection of claims 1, 4-24, and 31-35 is improper, and the withdrawal of such rejection is respectfully requested.

II. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance, and an early indication of the same is courteously solicited. The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned by telephone at the below listed telephone number, in order to expedite resolution of any issues and to expedite passage of the present application to issue, if any comments, questions, or suggestions arise in connection with the present application.

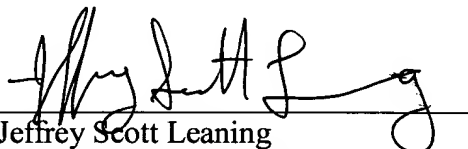
The appropriate fee for a Request for a Three-Month Extension of Time is filed concurrently herewith and Applicant believes that no additional fee is required. Nevertheless, in the event that a variant exists between the amount tendered and that determined by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to enter this Reply or to maintain the present application pending, please charge or credit such variance to the undersigned's Deposit Account No. 50-0206.

Respectfully submitted,
HUNTON & WILLIAMS LLP

Dated: April 19, 2005

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